


## City of Alexandria, Virginia

## MEMORANDUM

DATE: OCTOBER 31, 2005

TO: THE HONORABLE MAYOR AND MEMBERS OF CITY COUNCIL

FROM: JAMES K. HARTMANN, CITY MANAGER 

SUBJECT: CITY COUNCIL CONSIDERATION OF THE FY 2005 ANNUAL REPORT  
FROM THE ALEXANDRIA COMMISSION ON PERSONS WITH  
DISABILITIES

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**ISSUE:** Receipt of the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities (ACPD) Fiscal Year 2005 Annual Report (Attachment).

**RECOMMENDATIONS:** That City Council receive the Annual Report from the Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities and thank the commission members for their efforts on behalf of the City.

**DISCUSSION:** The Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities is a 17 member advisory Board appointed by City Council to serve as the principal advocate for issues relating to disability in Alexandria. Their Annual Report (Attachment) lists a number of activities for 2004-2005:

- ◆ Advocating for the rights and needs of persons with disabilities during the City's review of its taxi industry ordinance and outdoor dining ordinance by providing testimony and written recommendations to City Council and for Public Hearings on issues affecting persons with disabilities.
- ◆ Partnering with DOT to support its budget request of \$30,000 to upgrade its Information Technology program.
- ◆ Honoring ACPD members who died during their term of service to the City with a Commemoration Day ceremony, which included the dedication of a memorial bench and plaque at Oronoco Park.
- ◆ Working with the City's Registrar of Voters to ensure the accessibility of all polling places and voting machines for persons with disabilities in Alexandria.
- ◆ Continuing efforts in disability awareness throughout the year including "Disability Employment Awareness Month," National Disability Mentoring Day, and the Annual Departmental ADA Coordinator's Training. Other annual events including the

presentation of the Gerry Bertier Scholarship, John Duty Collins III Outstanding Advocate Award, and the Disability Awareness Business Awards undertaken in conjunction with the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce.

**ATTACHMENT:** The Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities 2005 Annual Report.

**STAFF:**

Debra R. Collins, Director, Department of Human Services

Jack Powers, Director, Division of Community Programs, DHS

MaryAnn Griffin, Director, Office of Aging and Adult Services, DHS

Mike Hatfield, Disability Resources Coordinator, Office of Aging and Adult Services, DHS



## **Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities**

### **ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDED JUNE 30, 2005**

#### **INTRODUCTION**

The Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities (ACPD or "the Commission") is a 17 member volunteer citizen body appointed by the Mayor and City Council. The Commission is comprised of 14 citizen members, a representative of the Alexandria Commission on Aging, and two representatives of the business community (one from the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce and one at-large). A majority of the citizen members are persons with disabilities. The Commission is organized into an executive committee and five standing committees, as well as ad hoc committees. Through its committees, the Commission focuses its work on issues related to transportation, accessibility, housing, employment, and public awareness. ACPD's monthly meetings are typically held at City Hall, Room 2000, at 7 p.m. on the second Wednesday of each month.

Among other things, ACPD provides advice to the Mayor, City Council, and City Manager on policies, programs, and legislation affecting Alexandria citizens who have a disability; makes recommendations regarding the City's affirmative action plan; and provides a forum for the expression of concerns and problems by persons with disabilities. ACPD also serves as Alexandria's Disability Services Board (DSB). Every three years, the DSB develops and makes available for public comment a comprehensive needs assessment identifying local needs, service gaps, priority populations, and services for people with physical and/or sensory disabilities. The DSB also administers the local Rehabilitative Services Incentive Fund (RSIF) to leverage private and public dollars to improve service delivery and public awareness regarding its target population. The Virginia General Assembly through the Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) grants the RSIF funds.

The Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities respectfully submits its annual report for the fiscal year ended June 30, 2005, highlighting the Commission's activities and accomplishments in the areas of transportation, accessibility, housing, employment, awards and public awareness.

## **TRANSPORTATION**

### **Taxi Industry Ordinance**

ACPD continued to advocate for the needs and rights of persons with disabilities throughout the review of the City's taxi industry ordinance. This advocacy contributed several key elements to the newly adopted industry ordinance including certification and training of drivers regarding persons with special needs, development of a disciplinary plan including additional training, and a requirement that 1% of all taxi vehicles be accessible. These elements are essential to ensuring the independence of residents with disabilities.

### **DOT Program**

ACPD and DOT (Paratransit) joined together on November 23, 2004, to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the DOT program. A well-attended reception was held prior to the City Council meeting, where a proclamation recognizing the occasion was read and approved by the Mayor and City Council. Many DOT patrons commented on how much the program has helped them maintain, and in some cases, gain independence. The Commission again partnered with DOT when it supported DOT's budget request of \$30,000 for an upgrade to its Information Technology program. In addition, ACPD worked closely with the Division of Transit Programs and Services to develop a new DOT Request for Proposals and provided a consumer to be on the panel to select vendors.

### **Gas Station Accessibility**

ACPD also worked with the Human Rights Commission to educate gas station owners about their obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) to provide full-service at the same price as self-service when more than one employee is on duty. Gas stations throughout the City received a letter explaining their obligations, accessibility stickers to be attached to their gas pumps, and other information on meeting the needs of persons with disabilities.

## **ACCESSIBILITY**

### **Voting**

ACPD continued its work with the City's Registrar of Voters to ensure accessibility of both polling places and voting for persons with disabilities. ACPD assisted in administering the state-mandated polling place accessibility surveys and provided input to the Registrar of Voters on solutions to accessibility issues. The Commission also identified accessibility issues that were not mentioned in the accessibility survey so these issues could be addressed before the November 2005 elections.

## **Outdoor Dining**

The Commission provided input regarding accessibility in the newly adopted ordinance for outdoor dining along King Street and participated in the training provided for restaurant managers and owners by Planning and Zoning. ACPD advocated and continues to advocate for maintaining an appropriate minimum sidewalk width with no exceptions. This advocacy prompted inclusion of a set minimum 5-foot clear sidewalk area. The Commission also successfully advocated for the provision of detectable warnings around dining areas to alert persons with visual impairments of a sidewalk obstruction.

## **Building, Facilities, and City Infrastructure Access**

ACPD assisted City staff in determining appropriate access for the historic Apothecary Museum and provided input on possible solutions to address these issues. ACPD initiated a work session that included members of the Commission and both Boards of Architectural Review, as well as staff from Code Enforcement, Office of Historic Alexandria, and Department of Planning and Zoning. The work session focused on the balance between accessibility and historic preservation. Appropriately, it was held at the City's historic Lloyd House, which was recently renovated and now provides access to persons with disabilities. The City indicated their support of ACPD's efforts and agreed to look at accessibility concerns on a case-by-case basis. ACPD will continue discourse with both Boards of Architectural Review.

The Commission continued its work to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Department of General Services and the Department of Recreation, Parks, and Cultural Activities. These memoranda will allow ACPD to provide input to both departments on capital projects.

The Commission continued to ensure accessible facilities by providing input into the design of a reconfigured sidewalk at the intersection of Commonwealth Avenue and Braddock Road and successfully advocating for accessibility accommodations in the design of the Duke Street bridge leading into Ben Brenman Park. Additionally, ACPD reviewed plans for upgrading City Hall elevators to ensure that appropriate accommodations were made for persons with disabilities and provided input on a newly designed bus shelter on Ballenger Avenue in the Carlyle development.

## **HOUSING**

The most recent Needs Assessment undertaken by the ACPD demonstrated that affordable, accessible housing is one of three top priorities in Alexandria. The Commission will continue to advocate to City Council and the Alexandria Redevelopment and Housing Authority on behalf of persons with disabilities about the dire and critical need of affordable, accessible housing in the City. The City's Office of

Housing's Project and Residential Assistance Modification Program ("RAMP") has actively worked to modify and rehabilitate existing housing to meet the accessibility needs of residents. ACPD continues to make referrals to the program and inform persons with disabilities that RAMP is actively seeking to assist persons with accessibility and modifications needs.

## **EMPLOYMENT**

### **Survey**

The ACPD worked with the City's Department of Personnel Services and the City's Affirmative Action Officer to develop a voluntary survey instrument to determine which jobs in the City persons with disabilities are performing. In addition, the Commission continues to advocate for a workforce utilization comparison base since the United States Census does not specifically isolate persons with disabilities.

### **JobLink**

The Commission maintains a partnership with the City's *JobLink* program. *JobLink*'s employment training specialist for persons with disabilities and its assistive technology specialist routinely attend the ACPD's monthly meetings. ACPD is kept updated on assistive technologies available to persons with disabilities who use *JobLink*'s Employment Resource Room. These services originally started as a result of a Rehabilitative Services Incentive Fund grant - A Model Employment Initiative.

The passing of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) resulted in more regulations requiring employment services for persons with disabilities. The Commission endorsed a *JobLink* grant entitled "A Path to Employment" through the Workforce Investment Board, which expanded services and technology available at *JobLink*. It should be noted that the U.S. Department of Labor's Office of Disability Employment Policy has recognized *JobLink* as a Best Practices site in services to persons with disabilities in a One Stop Employment Center.

### **Disability Awareness Month**

Each year, October is recognized as Disability Employment Awareness Month and many activities to focus on the employment of persons with disabilities are undertaken by ACPD. Specifically, the City Council issued a Proclamation declaring October 2004 as Disability Employment Awareness Month in the City and the Commission, in conjunction with the Department of Personnel Services and the Alexandria City Public Schools, promotes participation in Disability Mentoring Day, which provides students with disabilities the opportunity of shadowing a City employee to learn the various aspects of governmental jobs.

### **ADA Coordinators Training**

Each department in the City has a designated ADA Coordinator to serve as a resource person for new hires, incumbent employees, or residents requesting reasonable

accommodations. An annual Departmental ADA Coordinators training program, held each October, is sponsored by the Department of Personnel Services and endorsed by ACPD. The City's Disability Resources Coordinator, who also serves as staff to the Commission, works in conjunction with staff from Personnel Services to develop a curriculum, locate speakers, and give presentations on assistive technology, case law, etiquette, and other disability-related topics to educate the ADA Coordinators. During this fiscal year, the training provided information on the ADA and discussed the hiring of temporary employees with disabilities, reasonable accommodations, and accessibility features available throughout the City. ACPD provided an overview of the Commission and information on Application Tracking and the Annual Utilization Report.

## **PUBLIC AWARENESS**

### **Gerry Bertier Scholarship and Community Organization Grant**

ACPD continued with its annual fundraiser. This fiscal year was a cooperative effort between the Port City Playhouse and the Commission. The play, One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, was performed in October 2004 at the Nannie J. Lee Recreation Center Auditorium. This site was selected because of its state-of-the-art accessibility features including, but not limited to, comfortable wheelchair access, audio description system for persons who are blind, audio system for individuals with hearing impairments, captioning, and it could facilitate interpreters for persons who are deaf. The funds raised by this event are used to support the Commission's Gerry Bertier Scholarship and the Community Organization Grant.

On June 14, 2005, ACPD held its annual Awards Ceremony at City Hall. In attendance were the Mayor, members of City Council, City staff, and the family and friends of the recipients. The John Duty Collins III Outstanding Advocate Award was posthumously awarded to Barbara A. Gilley in recognition of her tireless advocacy on behalf of persons with disabilities. Barbara served on the ACPD for many years and served as chair of the Commission from 2001 to 2003. The Gerry Bertier Scholarship was awarded to Sean O'Boyle Franko to assist with his graduate studies at George Mason University.

### **Disability Awareness Awards**

The ACPD and the Alexandria Chamber of Commerce sponsored two Disability Awareness Awards in November 2004. The focus of one award is to acknowledge an Alexandria business that excels in employing persons with disabilities and the second award acknowledges a local business that provides outstanding service to persons with disabilities. BJ's Wholesale was recognized for its employment services for persons with disabilities and the AMC Hoffman 22 Movie Theater was recognized for its audio description service, captioning program, and overall accessibility to persons with disabilities. The Awards Ceremony was held at the Hilton Old Town Alexandria.

### **Emergency Preparedness and Citizen Corps Council**

ACPD continues to follow the Emergency Preparedness Plan that has been developing over the last several years. ACPD is always willing to assist on the efforts to upgrade the Plan to ensure that persons with disabilities are considered. ACPD was an integral part of the development of the newly established Citizen Corps Council. During the 2005 fiscal year, the Commission was represented with a liaison seat on the temporary committee to help draft and develop the role of a formal Citizen Corps Council for the City. As a result, the Commission has a permanent designated seat on the Citizen Corps Council and will work to ensure that disaster and emergency services for persons with disabilities will be provided effectively and efficiently.

### **Web Site**

ACPD began developing a web site to serve as an informational resource on the Commission and disability issues. ACPD will continue to work with the City's information technology staff to get the site up and running on the City's web site.

### **Commemoration Day**

Mayor William D. Euille and the members of the City Council issued a Proclamation declaring May 21, 2005, "Commemoration Day" to honor the ACPD members who died during their term of service to the City of Alexandria. On Saturday, May 21, the ACPD dedicated a commemoration bench and memorial plaque in memory of its deceased Commission members at Oronoco Bay Park during a ribbon-cutting ceremony. The bench and plaque memorialized the contributions of John Duty Collins, III; Eunice K. Fiorito; Robert D. Holland, Jr.; Geoffrey M. Baynard; Felix Wedgwood-Oppenheim; and Barbara A. Gilley who served the community and volunteered their leadership and expertise towards the goal of improving the lives of persons with disabilities in the City of Alexandria.

### **SUMMARY**

The Alexandria Commission on Persons with Disabilities continues its work on behalf of persons with disabilities in Alexandria to remove all remaining physical and attitudinal barriers to ensure equal access and full integration to all City programs, services, and activities. In addition, ACPD encourages the City's leadership and employees that as they conduct their day-to-day operations to maintain a commitment to persons with disabilities and the ADA, which protects people with disabilities from discrimination in employment, provides access to telecommunications and public and private services and accommodations, and creates an environment that promotes equal opportunity and independence.

ACPD recognizes that the many positive accomplishments in Alexandria result not only from civil rights ensured by the ADA, but also from the significant involvement of the Mayor, City Council members, and the residents of Alexandria. On behalf of Alexandrians with disabilities, the ACPD will continue to advocate, challenge, and

partner for further progress for people with disabilities to live, work, be independent, and enjoy the benefits of full access to community life in the City of Alexandria.

The City of Alexandria is committed to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act. If you would like to request this material in an alternative format, please e-mail [mike.hatfield@alexandriava.gov](mailto:mike.hatfield@alexandriava.gov) or call 703-838-0711, TTY 703-836-1493.